

Written statement of ENS [REDACTED] concerning the events of 17 August 2006

During the morning of 17 August 2006 LT Hill approached me and asked if I would be interested in being a dive tender. I agreed. At the conclusion of the work day preparations were made for ice liberty. After ice liberty was authorized I spent approximately thirty minutes assisting ENS [REDACTED] with the setup and distribution of refreshments. At this point BM2 Duque passed by carrying dive equipment and told me that LT Hill was waiting for me in the dive locker. I found LT Hill in the dive locker and assisted in putting on her drysuit. I carried some of her equipment and escorted her to the ice edge just forward of the bow where the dive would occur. After LT Hill, BM2 Duque and ENS [REDACTED] reached the ice edge and had their equipment at the ready; LT Hill assembled the divers and the tenders (DC3 [REDACTED], LTJG [REDACTED] and I) for a dive brief.

The plan was to practice adjusting buoyancy, just under the surface, then to proceed to 20 feet where they would practice other skills. This first dive was planned to last 20 minutes. The divers would then return to the surface, take the underwater video camera and commence a second 20 minute dive that would not include the buoyancy adjustment practice just under the surface. LT Hill then briefed the tenders and the divers on the signals to be passed via tending lines. One pull meant "are you ok" the tender or diver was to answer back with a single pull if they were ok. Two pulls meant "diver needs slack". The tender was to respond with two pulls then give slack slowly. I cannot remember what three pulls signified. Four pulls meant "diver is coming up; the tender should take in slack as it comes. The tender was to respond with four pulls, then take slack out as it came. A rapid repeated tugging indicated an emergency. The tender was to begin immediately pulling the diver up at a rate of one foot per second. This was gone over twice to ensure all divers and tenders understood. At this point BM2 Duque indicated that he would prefer to use a thumb up sign to indicate "ok" instead of the normal thumb to index finger sign. He indicated that the normal sign was too difficult to make in the restrictive gloves he was wearing. LT Hill agreed and stated that four fingers would be the sign for "going up". (In recreational diving, a thumb up sign indicates "going up") LT Hill then assigned the tenders to specific divers; I was assigned to ENS [REDACTED]

LT Hill and ENS [REDACTED] sat at the ice edge, BM2 got ready behind them. I clipped ENS [REDACTED] into her buoyancy compensator. I then helped her put her fins on. I helped her plug her low pressure hose into her drysuit. I then turned on her air; she had 3500 psi. LT Hill found that her "auga" was fogging up, so she put Sea Gold antifog gel in it, and then rinsed it. ENS [REDACTED] followed suit. ENS [REDACTED] hood was already on, so when I put her "auga" on it was on the outside. LT Hill's tender did the same. BM2 walked over to the ice edge and sat to the right of LT Hill (ENS [REDACTED] was on LT Hill's left). His hood was on over the top of his "auga", we (the tenders) asked LT Hill which way was correct, she told us that the hood was supposed to go on the outside of the "auga". With help from MK1 [REDACTED] I fixed the hood over ENS [REDACTED] "auga" making sure that the "auga" was tight and that the hood appeared to seal around the "auga." I then attached the clip at the end of the tending line to the metal "D" ring at the base of the right side of ENS [REDACTED] buoyancy compensator. LT Hill assigned BM2 to enter first, followed by her. ENS [REDACTED] was to enter last.

All three divers entered the water in the specified order without incident. All three were floating on the surface breathing off their "auga's". At this point ENS [REDACTED] informed the other divers that she felt water entering her suit. She adjusted the valve on the left arm of her dry suit with no effect. She stated that she believed that the neck seal was too loose. ENS [REDACTED] indicated that she could not dive with the equipment malfunction and LT Hill concurred. LT Hill told her to check the dive locker for a functional dry suit in her size. MK1 [REDACTED] and I pulled ENS [REDACTED] out of the water. I helped her take off her hood, "auga" and buoyancy compensator/tank. This equipment was moved away from the ice edge. At this point the other two divers were still at the surface. I then accompanied ENS [REDACTED] back to the dive locker where I helped her take her dry suit off. We heard a pipe that indicating that ice liberty would conclude in about 40 minutes. Her arms were wet, but we were unable to determine if the leak had come from the neck or the wrist seals. ENS [REDACTED] was not planning on diving at this point due to the time constraints and the amount of time dressing out takes. We briefly looked for another drysuit, but none was to be found.

At this point I told ENS [REDACTED] that I wanted to take some pictures and collect some snow and that I would help her carry the gear still on the ice back to the boat when the other divers came up. After about 10 minutes of photographing and snow collection I was returning to the ship (The boat had just piped 10 minutes until the conclusion of ice liberty) when I saw people doing a polar bear swim to the right of

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where the divers had gone down. I approached and noticed that there was a large crowd gathering around the dive tenders. Suddenly I heard a report that BM2 could be seen and that he was unconscious. Shortly thereafter both divers were pulled onto the ice. Someone yelled "Get the Dive Manual" I immediately preceded to the dive locker, found the manual and was proceeding to the scene when stretcher bearers were piped to the ice. I grabbed a stretcher with a scientist, but I was soon replaced by MST3 [REDACTED]. When I arrived on the ice I began looking through the manual with ENS [REDACTED] looking for important Diver first aid information. Shortly thereafter BM2 and LT Hill were being put in stretchers. I looked for and found BM2's buoyancy compensator. The "auga" was covered in blood and a whitish substance. I checked his depth gauge and found the max depth indicator to be maxed out at 200 feet. I looked for LT Hill's gear. I didn't find it immediately, but shortly thereafter someone brought it back with the depth gauge cut off. The max depth indicator read 190 feet.

ENS [REDACTED] and I followed the stretchers as they were carried to sick bay. I called out that they needed to be recompressed to 200 ft. After entering sick bay, ENS [REDACTED] and I continued to read the Dive manual. After several minutes, the XO asked us to keep notes on what was happening. I gave the pad to ENS [REDACTED] due to her superior handwriting and proceeded to help gather SCUBA tanks to pressurize the hyperbaric chamber. The tanks were originally thought to be empty, but I tested them and found them all to be full. I then helped put BM2's buoyancy compensator, regulator and tank in a bag. The bag was marked with his name, and then locked in the Photo lab with LT Hill's gear. All hands were then piped to the flight deck to receive an announcement.

At some point in the pre-dive process there was a delay as LT Hill and ENS [REDACTED] waited for BM2 to get equipment from Healy. I do not remember if this was before or after the brief.

To the best of my knowledge, the above statement is true.

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